



The Manly Art: Bigger is better at the Dolphin.

By DANA SELF, June 21, 2007



A gestural machismo dominates the Dolphin in June. And the work is accomplished, enthusiastic and smart. This predominantly male exhibition showcases some of the most exciting work in town.

Disappointingly, only three of the 13 artists are women, and their work is not installed in the main gallery. So let's start with them. Ke-Sook Lee, Peregrine Honig and Anne Lindberg all work within their familiar aesthetic and conceptual frameworks. All three artists address the body. In her large "Transformation," Lee excavates domestic territory, combining a found material — in this instance, doilies — with fabric that she reconstructs through delicate needlework. Stitching around the holes cut in translucent fabric, Lee suggests a corporeal relationship among skin and textiles and domesticity. Lindberg's work, like Lee's, evokes the intimate, physical nature of her mark-making: Her graphite-on-board "Parallel 8" incorporates the effect on her hand of her own breathing and subtle body movements while she draws parallel lines.

Archie Scott Gobber's "Erect" (left)

Honig's series "Father Gander Portfolio of 6" recontextualizes children's stories into adult pathologies and obsessions. Honig depicts girls in various stages of undress, then broadens the works' meanings by adding text to ground them in introspective narratives. In "Glass Slipper," the written text "She learned to walk on an eggshell floor in a narrow glass house with a tongue for a door" implies life's painful passages, from which we rarely emerge unscathed.

These pieces are strong and evocative. But by comparison, the men's work, out front, feels big, brash and exciting. "Erect," for example. Archie Scott Gobber's mixed-media construction is one of the exhibition's outstanding pieces. He spells out with descending letters a word that engages us on many levels. The monumental vertical construction creates a culturally astute and multilayered spectacle. Gobber's work gets more complex and expansive every time I see it.

Brandon Anschutz's "Hybrid" deals with flatness and illusion. He builds up areas of striped paint and exploits vast, flat areas of color field. Familiar-looking objects seem to sit on an invisible shelf — Anschutz's reference to illusionistic space. Aptly titled, this hybrid painting floats between representation and formal abstraction, underscoring a dynamic and satisfying tension between the two impulses.

Like Anschutz, Eric Sall examines the dualities within abstract and illusionistic painting. His "Give It Up or Turn It Loose" takes advantage of paint's plasticity to create hard edges. Compared with Anschutz's cool, flat, minimalist approach, Sall's technique is gestural and expressionistic; he layers different shapes over striped areas. Exploring the material properties of paint — he powers it around the canvas — Sall also challenges any notion of paint's abstract expressionist authority: Despite the paint's muscularity and dominance, it often references something more than simply itself.

That's what invigorates so many of these works. They're paintings that transcend the materiality of paint.